

Destiny Fulfilled: Tsongkhapa's Spiritual Training as a Song of Realization

OM! May we have happiness and excellence!

1. The eyes for the world to see higher realms and the freedom of liberation,
A resting place for those tired from wandering on the paths of cyclic existence,
The root of happiness and excellences: my kind spiritual masters
And the Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure (Manjushri)—I bow to your feet!

2. To rejoice in virtue is taught [by the Victor Buddha] as the best way
To gather a great store [of merit and wisdom] with little effort.
Particularly, regarding any virtues you have collected in the past,
If you develop, without arrogance, great joy in your previous virtues,
It is said that those virtues will increase even more.
To act in keeping with the guidance given by the Victor,
And because I see many other purposes as well,
It would be good, O mind, to foster this kind of joy!

3. In the beginning, I sought out extensive learning,
In the middle, all the scriptures dawned on me as instructions,
And in the end I practiced all day and all night and
Dedicated it all for the Teaching to flourish!

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!

Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

I. How I sought out extensive learning

4. If the darkness of confusion about which points to adopt
Or reject is not dispelled by the lamp of perfect learning,
And the path remains unknown, what need is there
To speak of entering the supreme city of liberation!

Therefore, not content with a partial or superficial understanding
Of the treatises by the Invincible Lord of Dharma (Maitreya) and
By the great masters widely renowned as the Six Ornaments¹ and
The Two Supreme Ones², I studied them all in great detail.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

5. Especially for an ordinary person,
The only way to establish the reality of things
Is through the treatises on valid reasoning.
So I studied their difficult points again and again with much effort.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

6. However much I pored over the treatises of Sutra and Tantra,
When practicing and expounding their profound meaning
I found my own view had not advanced much beyond that
Of someone who had learned nothing and knew nothing at all.
So I thoroughly studied all the essential points and deduced
The correct view through the subtle dialectical reasoning
That differentiates the profound, particularly found in the treatises by Nagarjuna;
And my doubts were completely resolved!

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

7. There are two vehicles to travel to complete enlightenment:
The Profound Vajra Vehicle and the Vehicle of Perfection³.
Of the two, the Secret Mantra is far superior to the Perfection Vehicle,
Something as well known to all as the sun and the moon.
While accepting these words to be true,
There are some who do not ask,
“What is the Profound Vehicle?”
And yet presume to be scholars;
If people like that are supposed to be intelligent,
Who are the dim-witted?
Alas! It is astonishing that anyone would neglect
An unexcelled path such as this, so hard to find!

Therefore, I entered the supreme vehicle of the Victors,
 The Vajra Vehicle which is more rare than a Buddha,
 The profound treasury of the two feats⁴,
 And I explored it at great length with much effort.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

8. I clearly saw that even if we decide that Highest Yoga Tantra
 Is supreme among all classes of Tantra⁵,
 This remains a mere assertion if we do not know
 The path system of the three lower Tantras.
 So I familiarized myself at length with the general and
 Specific classes of Tantra: The Tantras of the three lineages⁶ of
 Action Tantra such as the *General Secret Tantra*⁷, *True Fulfillment*⁸,
 the *Teaching Requested by Subahu*⁹, *Later Concentration*¹⁰ and so forth.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

9. Within the second class, the Performance Tantra,
 I studied the main Tantra, the *Manifest Enlightenment of
 Vairocana*¹¹ and thoroughly ascertained
 Every aspect pertaining to Performance Tantra.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

10. Within the third class, the Yoga Tantra, I studied
 The main Tantra, the glorious *Compendium of Reality*¹²,
 The Explanatory Tantra *Vajra Peak*¹³ and so on,
 And enjoyed the feast of Yoga Tantra!

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

11. As for the fourth class, the Highest Yoga Tantra, I studied
 The Root Tantras, the Explanatory Tantras and others
 That are as renowned among the Indian sages as the sun and the moon:
 Of the Father Tantras, *Guhyasamaja*, and of the
 Yogini Mother Tantras, *Hevajra* and *Chakrasamvara (Heruka)*¹⁴.
 I also studied the *Stainless Light*¹⁵, a pioneering
 [commentary] that illuminates the *Kalachakra* Tantra,
 A system of explanation different from other Sutras and Tantras.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

This concludes the first section: how initially I sought out extensive learning.

II. How all the scriptures dawned as instructions

12. Then, with a firm, intense and enduring faith in Manjugosha
 Who best dispels the darkness from the mind of the disciples,
 I prayed for the scriptures to dawn on me as spiritual advice,
 And worked to accumulate all the requisite conditions.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

13. Striving thus I developed a unique conviction about the stages
 Of the path to enlightenment, the tradition passed down from Nagarjuna and
 Asanga;
 And hence the *Perfection of Wisdom [Sutras]*, the supreme scriptures
 On the profound, dawned upon me as spiritual advice.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

14. In this northern land, there are many who declare,
 Whether they have studied the texts on logic or not,
 That there is no graduated practice leading to enlightenment
 In the *Compendium of Valid Cognition*¹⁶ or the Seven Treatises on Pramana¹⁷.

But they also take as authoritative that Manjushri
 Endorsed the composition [of the *Compendium of Valid Cognition*],
 When he explicitly said to Dignaga, "Write this [text]!
 In the future, it will become like an eye for all wandering beings!"
 Recognizing these [two views] to be completely contradictory,
 I specifically examined the system of logic: The meaning of the homage
 in the *Compendium of Valid Cognition* [is revealed by] the *Pramanasiddhi chapter*,
 Establishing through the forward and reverse [reasoning]
 That the Buddha is an authoritative guide for those seeking liberation¹⁸.

Through that I found a deep conviction that his Teaching alone
 Is the entryway for those in pursuit of complete freedom;
 And I found special joy in the fact that the essential aspects of
 The path relating to both (the foundational and universal) vehicles
 Are made accessible by the method of logical reasoning.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

15. Then, through the hard and methodical work of combining the two [texts],
*Levels of a Bodhisattva*¹⁹ and *Ornament of the Sutras*²⁰
 All the treatises of the Invincible Lord of Dharma (Maitreya),
 And his followers, dawned on me as instructions for my practice.

*Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
 Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!*

16. In particular, by relying on the *Compendium of Training*²¹

That provides certainty about all the essential aspects
Of the path by arranging [the topics of] the profound and
Extensive scriptures in [a specific] order, I could clearly see
The stages to be followed in practicing the content of the many
Excellent treatises by Nagarjuna such as the *Compendium of Sutras*²².

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!

Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

17. Then, by relying on Buddhaguhya's lucidly explained

Quintessential advice on the *Later Concentration* and
The *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, all the essential aspects
Of the path dawned as instructions.

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!

Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

18. Seeing how the essentials of the path in the *Compendium of Reality*

Are contained in the three samadhis was not so difficult,
But knowing how hard it is to realize how to meditate on the profound
I relied on the correct explanation by the Great Pandit Buddhaguhya,
Which integrates Root, Explanatory, and Combined Yoga Tantras and
Elucidates the stages by which to familiarize oneself
With the profound practices of the three [lower] classes of Tantra —
And it dispelled the darkness [of confusion] in my mind.

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!

Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

19. Ultimate among the well-spoken teachings of the Sage (Buddha)

Is the glorious Highest Yoga Tantra,
Of which the greatest and most profound
Is the King of Tantras, the Glorious Guhyasamaja.

On this, the supreme philosopher Nagarjuna has said
 That the essentials of the path are concealed in the
 Root Tantra by way of the six limits and the four modes²³.
 So they must be understood by following the Explanatory Tantras
 And through the oral instructions of a master.

Viewing this as essential, I acquainted myself at length
 With the different texts of the Arya [Nagarjuna's] Tradition of Guhyasamaja:
 The ultimate pith instructions contained in the *Concise Sadhana*²⁴,
 The *Lamp of Concise Practice*²⁵, the *Graded Presentation*²⁶ and so on.

Relying on [the commentary] that illuminates the Root Tantra like a lamp²⁷
 I compared these with the Five Explanatory Tantras²⁸ and studied them intensely.
 Through this effort I came to understand
 The two stages of Guhyasamaja in general and
 The essential aspects of the Completion Stage²⁹ in particular.

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

20. By dint of this, the essential points of many Tantras such as
 Samvara, Hevajra and Kalachakra dawned on me as instructions.
 I have already explained this elsewhere,
 Here I just briefly mention it for the discerning.

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!
Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

*This concludes the second section: showing how, in the middle, all the scriptures
 dawned as instructions.*

III. How I practiced day and night and dedicated the virtue for the teachings to flourish

21. Once [the scriptures] had become a treasure of instructions,
 I put them into practice by familiarizing myself with the path that is
 Complete in all the essential aspects — the path that is common to
 The two systems of the Mahayana³⁰ and the two stages of the uncommon path³¹.

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!

Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

22. It is said that a river Ganges of Bodhisattvas' prayers
 Are contained within the aspirations to uphold the sacred Dharma.
 So I dedicated any root of virtue I accumulated
 For the teachings of the Sage to spread!

Thinking this over, how well my destiny was fulfilled!

Thank you very much, O Noble Lord Wisdom Treasure!

This concludes the third section: how, in the end, I practiced day and night and dedicated all virtue for the teachings to flourish.

[Dedication]

In order to vastly increase my own virtue and
 Show the many fortunate beings having clear discernment
 The right entrance [to the Dharma] in a manner appropriate for them
 I wrote this description of my spiritual training and realizations.

By the accumulation of virtue thus attained, may all beings
 Ascend by these same steps, and having become able
 To uphold the unexcelled yogic discipline of the Buddha,
 Enter the path that pleases the Victorious Ones!

Colophon:

Written by the well-read Eastern Bhikshu Tsongkhapa Losang Dakpai Pal at the Triumph of Virtue Monastery on the Great Nomad Mountain. The scribe was Kazhipa Rinchen Pal. May the precious teachings flourish everywhere!

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Tenzin Tsepag (Dharma Interpreter/Translator)

Footnotes:

¹ The Six Ornaments are: Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignaga and Dharmakirti.

² The Two Supreme Ones are: Gunaprabha and Shakyaprabha. These great Indian masters composed important commentaries on the Buddha's teachings.

³ The Buddha Dharma can be classified into two vehicles: the Foundational Vehicle or Pali Tradition (*Hinayana*) and the Universal Vehicle or Sanskrit Tradition (*Mahayana*). The practice of the former leads to the attainment of liberation from Samsara.

The Sanskrit tradition can be further categorized into two: the Tantra, Profound Vajra or Secret Mantra Vehicle and the Sutra or Perfection Vehicle. The Secret Mantra Vehicle is based on the Buddha's teachings on the various Tantras which are associated with particular meditative deities. The Perfection Vehicle is mainly based on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. Both vehicles of the Sanskrit Tradition teach the means to attain the enlightenment of a Buddha, with the Perfection Vehicle serving as the foundation for the Tantra Vehicle.

⁴ The two types of feats (*Siddhi*) are the common or ordinary feats and the uncommon or supreme feat. The supreme feat is the enlightenment of a Buddha. The ordinary feats refer to miraculous powers attained in the course of spiritual practice that are taken as signs of progress on the path and employed for the benefit of the teachings and disciples.

⁵ Tantric texts and practices can be categorized into four classes: (1) Action Tantra (*Kriya*), (2) Performance Tantra (*Carya*), (3) Yoga Tantra (*Yoga*) and (4) Unexcelled or Highest Yoga Tantra (*Anuttarayoga*). One way of describing the differences is in terms of the emphasis each places on external or internal actions: (1) Action Tantra mainly emphasizes external actions, (2) Performance Tantra places equal emphasis on external and internal actions, (3) Yoga Tantra mainly emphasizes internal actions and (4) Highest Yoga Tantra emphasizes special internal actions. Also, each class is associated with different meditative deities.

⁶ The meditative deities of Action Tantra can be categorized into three families or lineages: the Tathagata Lineage (main meditative deity Manjushri), the Padma or Lotus Lineage (main deity Avalokiteshvara), and the Vajra Lineage (main meditative deity Vajrapani).

⁷ *Samanya Vidhiramguhyatantra*

⁸ *Susidhi*

⁹ *Subahupariprccha*

¹⁰ *Dhyanottara*

¹¹ *Vairocanabhisambodhi*

¹² *Tattvasamgraha*

¹³ *Vajrashekhara*

¹⁴ The many different Tantras of Highest Yoga Tantra can be categorized into Father Tantras and Mother Tantras. A Father Tantra mainly presents methods for attaining the illusory body, while a Mother Tantra mainly presents methods for attaining the clear light mind. Examples of Father Tantras are the Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka Tantra, and examples of Mother Tantras are the Hevajra and Chakrasamvara Tantra.

¹⁵ The *Stainless Light* or *Vimalaprabha* is one of the main commentaries on the Kalachakra Tantra. It is attributed to the Shambala King Pundarika and was composed approximately at the beginning of the 11th century. It was translated into Tibetan and it survives in the original Sanskrit.

¹⁶ *Pramanasamuccaya* or *Compendium of Valid Cognition* was composed by Dignaga (c. 480 to c. 540 CE) and is one of the greatest works on Buddhist logic and epistemology.

¹⁷ The Seven Treatises on Pramana are seven commentaries on Dignaga's *Compendium of Valid Cognition* composed by Dharmakirti (c. 6th or 7th century CE). The most popular of the seven is the *Commentary on Valid Cognition (Pramanavarttika)*. Both Dignaga and Dharmakirti were Nalanda Masters who strongly affected the course of both Buddhist philosophy and Indian philosophy in general. The debate format that is still used by Tibetan Buddhist students of debate is largely based on their works.

¹⁸ Dharmakirti's *Commentary on Valid Cognition* has four chapters. The second, known as the *Establishing Pramana* or *Pramanasiddhi* chapter is considered the most important. It elucidates the verse of homage in Dignaga's *Compendium of Valid Cognition* that praises the Buddha by way of citing five of his excellent qualities. Dharmakirti draws out these five and presents them as proofs or reasons establishing that the Buddha is an authoritative guide who can lead sentient beings to liberation and enlightenment. The *Pramanasiddhi* chapter presents the reasoning about the five qualities in two ways: in the order set out in Dignaga's verse of homage and in the opposite order, referred to as the *forward* and the *reverse systems*.

¹⁹ The *Levels of a Bodhisattva* or *Bodhisattvabhumi* was composed by the Nalanda Master Asanga (c. 4th century CE). See a complete English translation by Artemus B. Engel in *The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment* (Snow Lion, Boulder, 2016)

²⁰ *Ornament of the Sutra* or *Sutralamkara* is one of the Five Texts by Maitreya.

²¹ The *Compendium of Training* or *Shikshasamuccaya* was composed by the Nalanda Master Shantideva.

²² *Sutrasamuccaya*

²³ The six limits are: the provisional meaning, the definitive meaning, the figurative meaning, the non-figurative meaning, the meaning that is literally true, the meaning that is not literally true.

The four modes are: the literal meaning, the general meaning, the hidden meaning and the ultimate meaning

²⁴ The *Concise Sadhana* [of *Guhyasamaja Akshobya*] or *Pindavidhisadhana* was composed by the Nalanda Master Arya Nagarjuna (c. 2nd century CE).

²⁵ The *Lamp of Concise Practice* or *Charyamelapakapradipa* was composed by the Nalanda Master Aryadeva (c. 3rd century CE).

²⁶ The *Graded Presentation* or *Samajasadhanavyavasthali* was composed by Nagabodhi who was a disciple of Nagarjuna.

²⁷ The commentary that illuminates the Root Tantra of Guhyasamaja like a lamp is the *Illuminating Lamp* or *Pradipodyotana* by Chandrakirti (7th century).

²⁸ The Five Explanatory Tantras of Guhyasamaja are: *Explanation of the Intent* (*Sandhiviyakarana*), *Vajra Garland Tantra* (*Vajramalabhidhanatantra*), *Tantra Requested by Indra* (*Devendrapariprccha*), *Tantra Requested by the Four Deities* (*Caturdevipariprcchatantra*) and *Vajra Wisdom Compendium* (*Vajrajnanasamuccaya*).

²⁹ The two stages of Guhyasamaja are: the Generation Stage and the Completion Stage.

³⁰ This refers to the paths that are common to the Secret Mantra Vehicle and the Perfection Vehicle. Examples are the three principal aspects of the path: renunciation, Bodhicitta and the correct view of emptiness.

³¹ The two stages of the uncommon path are the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra: the Generation Stage and the Completion Stage.